Inconvenience

“Suos Cultures Scientia Coronat”

Translation:

“”Knowledge crowns those who seek her”

Syracuse University uses its motto to drive and explain the school’s motivation in education. The school believes any one person that wants knowledge, and gets it will succeed. But what happens when a person gets to the university and can’t even make it to class? Does the campus provide access to those seeking knowledge or are they unwelcomed to the campus? The way accessibility on campus is represented by the buildings on campus is demonstrated by how much of an convenience (or inconvenience) they are to a person with a disability.

I am in interested in accessibility on campus because I am going to school at Syracuse University to become a civil engineer. I want to design buildings and make renovations to buildings that need to encompass universal design, which is defined by Dictionary.com as providing products to both the abled-bodied and disabled. As an engineer, I must think of things not only so the abled bodied can reach a destination but also so a disabled person can utilize a space. David Sibley, in “Introduction to Geographies of Exclusion” says that “to get beyond the myths which secure capitalists hegemony, to expose oppressive practices, it is necessary to examine the assumptions about inclusion and exclusion which are implicit in the design of spaces and places” (Sibley 548). He argues that the design of space is what motivates the description of disability in society. This applies to considering the design of the campus, the main focus being universal access. We must investigate the overall theme of the campus design because this will lead to the University’s role with disability. After this consideration, we can come to the conclusion of whether or not a person with a disability can be welcomed on campus with significant access. So now the question is: are there any spaces on campus that denied to the disabled?

The issue on Syracuse campus isn’t so much that buildings are inaccessible but they are inconvenient to access with people with disabilities, the main issue being loss of time. Crouse Hall is one of the two buildings that first made the school a campus in 1870. It is beautifully historic, on top of a hill that has steps leading in from all sides. But when a person is confined to a wheel chair, they cannot reach many places with ease, rather they have to go through the back of the beautiful structure to basement where they have to take an elevator. But there is no clear signage to this entrance, so it may become very frustrating to a person to find the entrance.

 Another building, Sims Hall, as described by Greg Callen, a man confined to a wheel chair, says it is very time consuming. The building has stair ins its front entrance and side, so it took him time to get from the front to the back of the building where there is a basement entrance. The basement entrance, very similar to a service entrance that often exists on campus is another issue that hinders and demotivates people into access. Link Hall, shown here doesn’t make a person with a disability feel welcomed into the building of engineering.

Carnegie, a library on campus that once utilized a stair case to its front case now uses two indoor stair wells to access the majority of the people for the able-bodied. But when disabled, there is an entrance with a ramp to the side of the building which is perfectly accessible. But there are numerous spaces in the library that have stairs leading into them or are in a private part of the building with no ramp access. The room shown to the left is an example of the room that has no access to a person with a walking disability. Another issue with Carnegie library is the library stacks themselves. Though I’m sure when the occasion arose any person would help the disabled reach the book of their choosing, the fact that the disabled person would need to rely on someone else to reach a book instead of on their own is the inconvenience.

 So instead of continuing listing every building on campus, we can draw a consensus that there aren’t actually any buildings on campus that will keep a disabled person locked out in the snow, but all the buildings exemplified are an inconvenience to a person with a disability. They cost time and effort that shouldn’t be spent. What is preventing these buildings from having a ramp in the main entrance of a building? Some people are disheartened and get fed up with the lack of convenience on campus.

As presented by Michael Davidson in “Universal Design: The Work of Disability in an Age of Globalization” he provides a new perspective on disability by examining disability on a global scale and putting into consideration its national and cultural place in the world as opposed to the medical definition. Davidson continues with the argument of inconvenience by saying “For persons with disabilities universal design poses the conundrum that increased access promised by the internalization of social services, healthcare, and technology is thwarted by limiting the meaning of access to new markets and economic activities” (Davidson 134). Although Davidson is applying universal design to a more general group of issues, his input can applied to issues on campus because access is “thwarting” education. The school promises that when a person wants knowledge, they will succeed. When access is in the formula however, it can become a road block to some people. (is this a stretch?)

In James Charlton’s “The Dimensions of Disability Oppression”, he gives multiple reasons as to why disability oppression exists and how the oppression organized. Charlton argues that political systems, culture, and power control the description of disability but also that the false sense of consciousness encourages this stereotype of disability in society. In Simi Linton’s “Reassigning Meaning”, she discusses culture’s perspective of disability and how it is considered a deficit by explaining language’s role in the manner. Both theorists explain how disability is viewed as something that hinders and holds a person back. When Linton says “Over the past century the term *disabled* and others, such as *handicapped* and the less inclusive term *crippled*, have emerged as collective nouns that convey the idea that there is something that links this disparate group of people. The terms have been used to arrange people in ways that are socially and economically convenient to the society” (Linton 224) the argument directly relates to Charlton’s depiction of society. Charlton spends much of the article discussing the structure of society and Linton’s explanation fits directly into the structure. The two theorists together can explain how disability’s depiction needs to change in society, but these arguments needs to linked-back to access.

Access being a hindrance on campus takes away from the goal of knowledge on campus. Dene, from the Beyond Compliance Coordinating Committee Blog uses an example to demonstrate how accessibility is an issue can be a direct issue with education.

If a lecture is inaccessible, students wouldn't be as able to engage in the discussion or the course materials afterwords. Or at least their engagement would be limited to specific approaches or practices, ie engagement becomes possible when activist activities are limited by the time required (the practices required) for such engagement in lecture (BCCC).

The same way the word “handicapped” hinders disability, “inaccessible” holds back education. Inaccessibility has been used in a way to explain why people with disabilities cannot reach their goals, in this case education at a university but this is not the case. People with disabilities cannot excuse themselves from their goal knowledge, they can proceed with time but only if they are willing to commit that time. (more connection needs to made with theorists)

Whether or not a person is excluded from campus is truly anonymous with person denying themselves that education. Syracuse University may have inconveniences in gaining access to buildings but the determination of the person with a disability is what gains them the access. Syracuse will not patronize a person into success, but the knowledge the university supplies will help them with that success. Syracuse University could change some of its buildings on campus to make them more universal but the inconveniences that exist now should add motivation to the people facing the inconveniences. (rough conclusion, will add/revise more later)